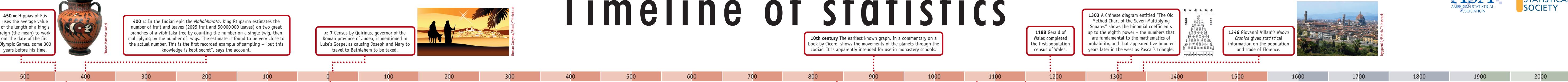
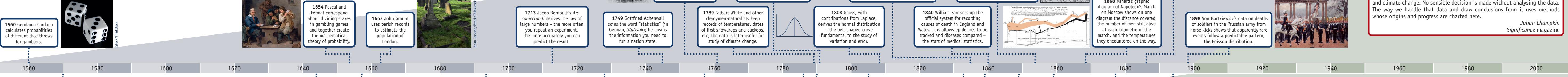


Timeline of statistics

Early beginnings



Mathematical foundations



Statistics is about gathering data and working out what the numbers can tell us. From the earliest farmer estimating whether he had enough grain to last the winter to the scientists of the Large Hadron Collider confirming the probable existence of new particles, people have always been making inferences from data. Statistical tools like the mean or average summarise data, and standard deviations measure how much variation there is within a set of numbers. Frequency distributions – the patterns within the numbers or the shapes they make when drawn on a graph – can help predict future events. Knowing how sure or how uncertain your estimates are is a key part of statistics.

Today vast amounts of digital data are transforming the world and the way we live in it. Statistical methods and theories are used everywhere, from health, science and business to managing traffic and studying sustainability and climate change. No sensible decision is made without analysing the data. The way we handle that data and draw conclusions from it uses methods whose origins and progress are charted here.

Julian Champkin
Significance magazine

Modern era

